

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached "Replacement Sheets" of drawings include changes to Figures 1-3. The attached Replacement Sheets 1/7, 2/7, and 3/7, which include Figures 1-3, replace the original sheets including Figures 1-3. In particular, the drawings have been amended to include the "Prior Art" heading for Figures 1-3.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets

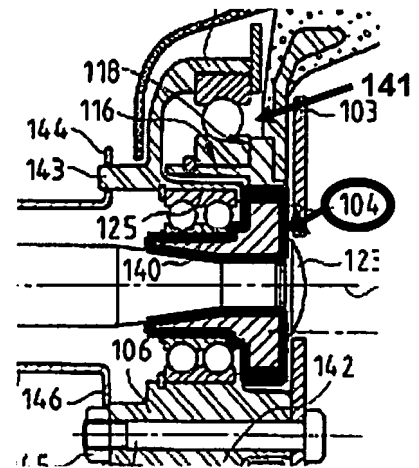
REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are now pending in the application. Claims 1-7 stand rejected. Support for newly added Claims 8-20 can be found throughout the application as originally filed. As such, no new matter has been presented. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Groleau et al. (EP No. 1 199 243). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants note that Groleau discloses a system (101) having a pinion (104) and tubular portion (125) separated by bearing (140), so that end (106) can rotate around the pinion (104) while being axially immobilized. See *Groleau at Paragraph [0039] and Fig. 5 (portion reproduced to the right)*. The rotation of the crown (114) of the steering wheel (102) is similarly achieved through a bearing (141) between the crown (114) and the tubular wall (126). See *Groleau at Paragraph [0040] and Fig. 5*.



In contrast, Applicants independent Claim 1 recites, in part:

"...the bearings both being retained to the fixed element by a first resilient retaining element, the first bearing being retained to the steering wheel by a second resilient retaining element."

In view of the above discussion, Applicants assert that Groleau does not teach, suggest or disclose each and every element of independent Claim 1. In particular,

Groleau fails to disclose that both bearings are retained “to the fixed element by a first resilient retaining element”. The Office appears to look to the pinion (104) in support of the “first resilient retaining element” as claimed by Applicants. However, as can be seen from the portion of Groleau’s Fig. 5 reproduced above, the pinion (104) is not in contact with the bearing (141) and, therefore, does not retain the bearing (141). Further, Groleau does not describe the pinion (104) as being of a “resilient” material. In fact, the pinion (104) cannot transmit the required torque if manufactured from a resilient material. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Office to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Battermann et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,264,235) in view of Koenig (DE 3940391). Claims 2-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Battermann in view of Koenig, as applied to Claim 1 above, and in further view of FR 2384157 A. Claims 6 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Battermann in view of Koenig, as applied to Claims 1 and 2 above, and further in view of Bair et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,044,785). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Battermann discloses a steering wheel having a lower hub (1) and an upper hub (2) connected by screws (3). See *Battermann at Col. 3, line 66 – Col. 4, line 1*. A rotary plate (11) is mounted on a bearing (12), which is, in turn, connected to the upper hub (2). See *Battermann at Col. 3, lines 17-21*.

As the Office notes, Battermann fails to disclose:

"...the fixed element also carrying a second bearing, the second bearing rotatably supporting a component to be connected to part of the steering column of a vehicle, the bearings both being retained to the fixed element by a first resilient retaining element, the first bearing being retained to the steering wheel by a second resilient retaining element."

The Office looks to Koenig in support of these missing elements. Koenig discloses a steering assembly including five bearing assemblies (20, 20', 18, 14, 14') with three of the bearing assemblies (20, 20', 18) supporting the steering shaft (3) for rotation, and the other two bearing assemblies (14, 14') supporting the steering wheel (1) for rotation. See *Koenig at Col. 3, line 16 – Col. 4, line 12 and Fig. 1*. A hub (5) is disposed between the external teeth (9) of the steering shaft (3) and the bearings (20', 18). See *Koenig at Col. 3, line 16 – Col. 4, line 12 and Fig. 1*. It appears that bearings (14, 20') are retained by a fixed element (16), but this element does not appear to be described in the disclosure. See *Koenig at Fig. 1*.

Accordingly, Koenig also fails to disclose:

"...the bearings both being retained to the fixed element by a first resilient retaining element, the first bearing being retained to the steering wheel by a second resilient retaining element."

The Office appears to look to the hub (5) of the Koenig reference in support of the "first resilient retaining element" as claimed by Applicants. However, it is clear that the hub (5) does not engage the bearings (14, 14'), and therefore, cannot retain both the bearings (14, 20' or 14', 18) as recited by Applicants in independent Claim 1. Further, Koenig does not describe the hub (5) as being of a "resilient" material. In fact,

the hub (5) appears to be meshingly engaged with the external teeth (9) of the steering shaft (3) and could not transmit torque if manufactured from a resilient material.

In view of the above discussion, Applicants assert that there is no motivation to include a second bearing in the Battermann system—let alone a single, resilient element to restrain both bearings as described in Applicants independent Claim 1. However, even looking to a second reference, Koenig, for these missing elements still fails to produce Applicants claimed invention. Both Battermann and Koenig fail to disclose that both bearings are retained “to the fixed element by a first resilient retaining element” as claimed by Applicants. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Office to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As Claims 2-7 depend from Claim 1, they are similarly in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Office to reconsider and withdraw the rejections of Claims 2-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

NEW CLAIMS

New Claims 8-20 are added herein for consideration. Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 8-10; independent Claim 11, as well as Claims 12-17, dependent therefrom; and independent Claim 18, as well as Claims 19 and 20, dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

Stephen T. Olson, Reg. No. 36,626

HARNESS, DICKEY & PIERCE, P.L.C.
P.O. Box 828
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48303
(248) 641-1600

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